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INSANITY IN ROYAL FAMILIES. A STUDY IN HEREDITY.

BY ALICE BODINGTON.

In the Section of Psychology at the annual meeting of the British Medical Association, 1894, a most interesting and suggestive paper was read by Dr. W. Lloyd Andriezen, on the steady increase of the whole group of neuroses. In this paper the following sentence occurs; "Nature stamps out the insanities herself; they end in sterile idiocy. But before such a consumation can be reached, a vast and interesting progeny has to be gone through, exhibiting all the intermediate phases of the insanities and the criminalities." Dr. Andriezen speaks of the conclusions to be drawn from the history of the notorious "Jukes family" in America, and promises to enlarge on this subject in a forthcoming paper.

Now, it is doubtless almost impossible to overestimate the importance of the study of the Jukes family as an example of inherited degeneration and vice amongst the dregs of society. But, as I read Dr. Andriezen's paper, a subject for a study of hereditary insanity at the opposite pole of the social system, suggested itself to me; namely its effects in the royal families of Modern Europe. For many hundred years the problem of hereditary insanity has been worked out in some of these families, and under circumstances which enable a student to follow out all its intricacies, since the connection of members of royal houses can, for obvious reasons, be more readily traced than those of private individuals.

The subject has interested me ever since I saw, many years ago, the great grandchild of a king suffering from the most violent form of mania I ever beheld. In this case the hereditary taint had passed through two generations without development, whilst the ancestor, in whom insanity can first be traced, was a contemporary of Henry the Eighth! Moreover the insanity of this ancestor partook of exactly the same char-

acter as that of his descendant in Windsor Castle two hundred years later. It is written of the "good Duke William" of Celle that when "in old age he was deprived of both sight and reason, he had occasional glimpses of mental light, when he would bid his musicians play the psalm tunes which he loved."

In this article I will speak chiefly of the Spanish and Austrian branches of the house of Hapsburg; and of the Russian house of Romanoff.

The Spanish Hapsburgs. In the year 1496 Joanna, second daughter of Ferdinand of Aragon, and Isabella of Castile, was married to Philip the Handsome, Son of Maximilian, Emperor of Germany, and Mary of Burgundy, daughter and heiress of Charles the Bold. It is to be doubted if any marriage in the whole course of history has been attended with more direct consequences than this, since Mary of Burgundy brought with her the fairest provinces of the Netherlands as her dower, which were thus exposed to the diabolical cruelty and bigotry of Spanish rule.

In 1506 Philip the Handsome died, as lately discovered historical documents appear to prove, from poison administered by his wife. Joanna, who had always been weak-minded, was possessed by an insane jealousy of her husband, and after his death she became completely mad. Fits of fury alternated with melancholy, and the sad life of this ancestress of long lines of kings ended in complete dementia. Joanna's jealousy of her husband did not cease with his death, but for years she persisted in carrying his body about with her, and violent accesses of fury occurred if any woman approached the corpse.

It is not likely that the insanity in the royal family of Spain began with Joanna, and it would be peculiarly interesting in this and other cases to trace the taint from its very beginning.

Joanna's sister Catherine was the mother of the "Bloody" Queen May of English History, who showed the characteristic moral insanity and ferocious bigotry of so many of the Spanish Hapsburgs. A granddaughter of Joanna's married to Duke William V. of Juliers and Cleves, went mad, and her husband shared the same fate. Her son, who was demented, died, and

so "Nature" in this instance, quickly "stamped out insanity and idiocy"; the double taint being peculiarly fatal.

Another sister of Joanna's married into the Portuguese House of Braganza and in Napoleon's time one of her descendants—queen in her own right—died raving mad. Numerous children of Ferdinand and Isabella were sickly and died young, and one is inclined to think it would have been a "crowning mercy" if all the others had shared the same fate.

But we must return to the descendants of Joanna who wore the Spanish crown. Her son, the Emperor Charles V. of Germany, was a sovereign of unusual ability, distinguished in war and still more in diplomacy. On his father's side it must be remembered that he came of a singularly healthy stock; his grandfather Maximilian had been in his youth a veritable hero of romance, brave and chivalrous to a fault, and in the guise of a simple knight errant had won the heart and hand of his bride, the richest heiress of Europe. We shall meet with a great grandson of Maximilian's who inherited all his brilliant qualities; but not in the legitimate line of descent.

But let us turn our eyes from the potentate who held the balance of power in Europe in his hands, to the man who, hardly past the prime of life, voluntarily laid down his power, and retired to spend his last years in the Convent of Yuste. Here, the melancholia which had remained latent during the earlier life of Charles V., gradually took possession of him. He insisted that his funeral obsequies should be performed, and the prayers for the dead read for him as he lay in sackcloth and ashes in his coffin in the convent chapel.

From the shock of this ghastly ceremony the once powerful Emperor never recovered; a fever took possession of him and in a few days he breathed his last.

His successor, Philip II, was one of the most gloomy and ferocious bigots the world has ever seen. Like a poisonous spider in its web, so from the palace prison to the Escorial, did this cruel and treacherous despot devise blackest ruin and death, with one stroke of his pen condemning a whole nation to death. A determined attempt was made to carry out this incredible sentence, which was only frustrated by the most

heroic bravery on the part of the doomed people. The case of Philip II may perhaps justly be considered one of moral insanity, for to the very end of his career he never showed the slightest consciousness of having done evil. Dying by inches in the slow torture of a most horrible disease, he displayed the utmost patience, fortitude and resignation to the will of God; his end was that of a saint and a martyr as he fixed his last expiring glances on the image of his crucified Saviour. This man who had caused rivers of blood to shed, who had brought fire, famine, torture and death in its most hideous forms to countless thousands of his fellow-creatures; who was treacherous to friends and foes alike; who was privy to the death of his own son; died in absolute peace with his conscience and his God! Those who ascribe infallible and divinely instilled instincts to conscience would do well to study the career of Philip II.

The career of Don John of Austria, half-brother to Philip II, may be noticed here, as illustrating the advantages of change of environment and of fresh blood where insanity is latent in a family. He was the son of Charles V by Barbara Blomberg, daughter of a respectful citizen of Ratisbon, and in his moral and mental qualities closely resembled his great grandfather, Maximilian, whose romantic early career earned him the title of the last of the knights-errant. His singularly brilliant career was ended by his too early death at the age of 33; the victim indirectly, if not directly, of the cold and cruel policy of his half-brother Philip II. As a mere youth, Don John of Austria had gained one of the decisive battles of the world, in the naval victory of Lepanto which rolled back that advance of Turkish power which was threatening the destruction of Europe. But this brilliant success raised the sleepless jealousy of his brother, and Don John was sent to the Netherlands, there to eat his heart out with repeated vexations and disappointments, purposely inflicted by the cold, crafty tyrant of the Escurial. No trace of the influence of his mad grandmother appeared in the buoyant spirits, the trusting, generous disposition, and brilliant courage of this illfated young hero.

The career of the wretched Don Carlos, eldest son of Philip II, may fitly be mentioned here. At an early age he showed a furious and wholly ungovernable temper, a delight in cruelty for its own sake and a propensity to ignoble vices; in short he displayed every characteristic of moral insanity. Thrown into prison by his brother, fits of fury, and of exhaustion from his vices were till lately judged to be the cause of his death, but modern researches show that he was one of the many secret victims of his merciless parent.

During the lives of the two sovereigns who succeeded Philip II, the sword of Damocles which hung over the royal house of Spain remained suspended, only to fall with crushing weight on the pitiable Charles II, in whom "Nature stamped out insanity in sterile idiocy." It must, however, be remarked that Nature took nearly two hundred years in accomplishing this process, even in conditions of the most unfavorable environment, and after repeated alliances with the tainted blood of Austria and Portugal. Charles II showed all the signs of the final stages of race degeneracy. Until his sixth or seventh year he was unable to stand, and was nursed on the knees of the ladies of the Court; his prognathous misshapen jaw could not be closed and he was constantly slavering; moreover his impotence, whilst it did not prevent the immolation of two young princesses as his nominal wives, was so well-known in Europe that intrigues, with regard to the succession to the Crown of Spain, went on throughout his miserable life. Semi-idiotic as was his mental condition, he was capable of suffering all the mental tortures that superstition could inflict, and his dying bed was surrounded by venal priests who threatened eternal damnation if his successor were not named according to their desires. So ended the direct male line of the Spanish Hapsburgs, descendants of the mad Joanna through her eldest son.

The Austrian Hapsburgs. The history of the Austrian Hapsburgs, descended from Joanna through her second son Ferdinand, presents much brighter features than those of the Spanish house. It is difficult, if not impossible, to apportion the share which the pernicious teaching of the Jesuits and the

gloomy traditions of the Spanish Court had in forming the characters of the two Monarchs of the Austrian line, who remind one respectively of Don Carlos and Philip II; or how large a share might be ascribed to hereditary taint.

Rudolf II (1576—1612) was the son of Maximilian II, one of the most enlightened and honorable princes of his time, and one who, strange to say, held the balance scrupulously even between his Protestant and Roman Catholic subjects. But Rudolf, unfortunately for himself and Germany, had been trained in the gloomy Court of Spain, and was a mere tool of the Jesuits. His temper was moody and variable, and he was subject to outbursts of uncontrollable passion, followed by abject submission to his advisers, the Jesuits, who had gained complete ascendancy over him.

If in Rudolf II we meet with many salient characteristics of Don Carlos, so in Ferdinand II. we have a type of character as inexpressibly odious as that of Philip II. To the ferocious bigotry of Ferdinand II, more than to any other cause, may be ascribed the Thirty Year's War, one of the most hideous wars that history has ever recorded. More than twelve million of people, at a moderate estimate, perished in this fratricidal strife; wolves ravened through the burnt and deserted villages; men killed their children and dug up the bodies of the dead for food; and, before its close, Germany lay bleeding and exhausted at the feet of France, and has only in this century recovered her strength. To ferocious bigotry Ferdinand added the blackest treachery and a cold blooded and diabolical cruelty. But atrocious as was his character we must remember that he, like Rudolf II was a tool of the Jesuits, then at the zenith of their power, and numbering in their ranks the most highly trained intellects of their time; whereas the cruelties and treacheries perpetrated by Philip II were spun out of his own brain.

The immediate predecessor of the present distinguished wearer of the Austrian crown was certainly of weak intellect, weeping when his physicians forbade him a favorite dish "Kaiser bin ich, und Nudeln muss ich haben" he sobbed. On another occasion his Minister hoped that the Emperor, who

was unusually silent at a cabinet council, was for once intent on affairs of state, when he suddenly exclaimed "I have sat at this window for an hour, and so many cabs, carriages and wagons have passed in that time." Not one word had he heard of the affairs of State! Yet Ferdinand was not so weak minded but that in calm times he could officiate as a crowned puppet. I think therefore we may say that the Austrain Hapsburgs have almost entirely escaped the taint of insanity; the line has produced numerous sovereigns distinguished by exceptional abilities and virtues such as Maximilian II, Maria Theresa, Joseph II, and the present Emperor Francis Joseph. On the abdication of his uncle, who wept for the dumplings, Francis Joseph, in most troublous times, was placed at the helm of State, and up to the present time, by the personal affection and the confidence he inspires, and by marvellous political tact, he has kept his heterogeneous dominions under his rule; perhaps the only man living who could have held such jarring elements together.

The House of Romanoff. Peter the Great, the founder of his family's greatness, presented a strange admixture of opposite qualities. One of Peter's brothers was imbecile, and the history of the Romanoff family leaves little doubt that there goes in them a tendency to insanity, latent or declared.

In Peter the Great we see on the one hand a man of extraordinary and commanding genius, whose ideas made, and still rule, modern Russia: a man who by sheer force dragged barbarous, semi-Asiatic Muscovy into the comity of European nations; and who with far seeing glance recognizing the vital necessity of a navy for Russia, did not disdain with that end in view to work as a common shipwright. On the other hand we see a drunken boor; subject to paroxysms of ungovernable fury; ferociously cruel; in a word showing the worst attributes of an utter savage.

Truly here we see the "beast within the man." But it seems as though his very superiority of brain makes the beast in man to so transcend all evil qualities of a beast of prey that one can hardly wonder that the human imagination conceived devils as the moving agents of such horrors. No wild beast's

brain could conceive or execute the prodigies of cruelty, debauchery and lust that characterize the beast within the man where it has gained the upper hand.

There is no doubt that Peter the Great, like other great geniuses, as for instance Mahomet and Napoleon, suffered from epileptiform attacks, and in his fits of frenzy was not responsible for his acts. Another factor may be taken into account in estimating the character of Peter the Great, namely his prolonged bouts of drunkenness, during which he would swallow incredible quantities of brandy. In these orgies Peter would find pleasure in pouring brandy through a funnel down the throat of some wretched courtier who had succumbed sooner than himself; a practical joke ending in the death of the victim. But the most gruesome incident in the life of Peter the Great was the death of his son Alexis. Alexis much resembled the ill-fated Don Carlos; his wife, a German princess, after five years of misery refused medicine and food, and was glad to find an escape in death; he was violently reactionary in his opinions, and Peter honestly believed that his hardly won reforms would be utterly undone if Alexis were his successor. But after the discovery of a formidable plot on the part of his son, Peter, determined to extort the whole truth, ordered Alexis to be flogged. Finding no one who would venture to execute his commands, Peter, mad with rage, proceeded to flog Alexis, (as he used formerly to flog his first wife,) till he left the wretched prince for dead on the floor; when he stalked out exclaiming "You need not alarm yourselves, the devil is not ready for him yet." During the next twenty-four hours the miserable sufferer was again twice flogged, and under the third application of the knout he died. The father's repentance was terrible and lasting; as chief mourner he followed his mangled son to the grave, crying as David did for Absalom, that he would willingly have died for his son. And when he again lashed himself into insane fury, it was to wash out his son's death in the blood of those who had tempted him to crime.

The next sovereign who calls for remark, Peter III, was grandson of Peter the Great through his daughter Anna. If

we say that Peter III repeated every vice of his grandfather's without any of his virtues we shall have said almost enough ; he was a drunken, madly vain, dissolute savage, and after being dethroned, was assassinated by the orders of his wife, Catharine II.

Paul I was not unlike Peter III in his general characteristics, and he too was assassinated. Alexander I, the rival of Napoleon, presents the greatest of contrasts to the Romanoffs we have hitherto seen ; he inherited the excellent qualities of his mother, Catherine the Great, whilst he was a stranger to her vices. Like Joseph II of Austria, he was too enlightened for his environment ; his schemes for good were frustrated ; his noblest hopes for his country disappointed ; a deep melancholy settled on his spirits, and like Joseph II he welcomed death.¹

The character of Alexander I was nearly repeated in that of Alexander II, his nephew, the "Tzar Liberator." As we survey the men of the Romanoff family in the present century, though we find many of its collateral members showing an undesirable atavism, yet the actual wearers of the Russian crown, with all their mistakes, must be credited with the honest intention of doing their best for their people. In short the final result shows that a ruling family may have a worse ancestor than a drunken epileptic, who was at the same time a man of supreme genius ! Unfortunately the race, once so strong, has been tainted through the female side with consumption, which promises to play worse havoc in two generations than epilepsy or drunkenness in two hundred years.

I can offer here only a slight and imperfect sketch of the lives on which a more fortunately situated enquirer might work. I have alluded only to the best known direct lines of succession, but a wide field of interest lies before the student who will follow the ramifications of European royal families through the female side. There have been constant inter-marriages between the Hapsburgs and the Bourbons. Perhaps it is not too far-fetched to ascribe the superior abilities of

¹"I am dying," said Joseph II, when his benevolent schemes for the good of Hungary had been utterly frustrated, "My heart must be made of stone not to break."

the House of Orleans to marriages which brought fresh blood into the family; whereas the alliances of the elder branch of the House of France were of the nature, known to stock raisers as "breedings-in-and-in."²

In any case it would be worth while to trace carefully—so far as possible—the origin of the characteristics of the French, Spanish and Neapolitan Bourbons, as compared with those of the House of Orleans: the three former bigoted, unprogressive, unable to assimilate the advanced ideas of their age; having after the French Revolution "learned nothing and forgotten nothing," and the House of Orleans descended from the younger brother of Louis XIV, abreast of all the ideas of their time, highly intelligent, cultivated and progressive. In the house of Orleans we are watching a rising family; in the other branches of Bourbons, families mentally and morally sinking.

Another interesting branch of enquiry, would be to trace the origin of the insanity in the Danish, Bavarian and Belgian royal families. The curious coincidence between the form of insanity which characterized the good Duke of Celle in the sixteenth century, and that from which his descendant, George III, suffered two hundred years later, I have already alluded to. But why did the taint of insanity remain latent for so many years, and can some marriage be traced which caused its recrudescence? I think it might be found in the family of the Princess of Wales, mother of George III; but I have no means here of tracing the lineage of that princess.

But having started this train of enquiry with the intention of cursing the whole group of Neuroses, as productive of in-

²Philippe brother of Louis XIV married Charlotte Elizabeth of Bavaria; one of the most strong minded and original personalities of her time.

Philippe's only son married a natural daughter of Madame de Montespan's; and had his ears soundly boxed by his mother when she heard of the engagement. Louis-Philippe-Joseph 1747—1793, married the only daughter of the Duc de Penthievre.

The mother of the late Comte de Paris was a Princess of Mecklenburg.

On the other hand Louis XIV, elder brother of Philippe, first Duke of Orleans, married the only daughter of Philip IV of Spain; Louis XVI married Marie Antoinette of the Austrian House of Hapsburgs, and the direct male line became extinct with the intensely narrow and bigoted Comte de Chambord, whose mother belonged to the Neapolitan branch of the Bourbons.

calculable hereditary evils, I find myself by no means, Balaam-like, "blessing them altogether" but arriving at the conclusion that with ordinary care and discretion the tendency to mental instability is not more mischievous, than the taint of strumous disease, of syphilis, of cancer,—in short of any of the other Protean ills with which civilized society is permeated. Fortunate indeed is the family which comes of a good, hearty, gouty stock; amidst a choice of evils this tendency to gout seems one of the least!

It also appears to me that the attempt to "stamp out" insanity, though it may seem easy on paper, would prove impossible in practice. There is an unfortunate correlation between various forms of disease which would oblige society to stamp out the greater part of the civilized portion of the human race, if a serious effort were made to stamp out insanity, one member of a strumous family may develop disease of the lung; another succumb to cerebral meningitis; a third become insane. The child of a drunken father may become insane or be a habitual drunkard, but he may also, if the drunken father be Philip of Macedon, prove an Alexander the Great. The child of syphilitic parents may develop a train of ills of which insanity may be one; or the hereditary taint may leave one generation untouched and destroy the next, as in the case of the House of Valois. You can drown the weakest puppy or kitten in a litter, but if you destroy your physically weak human beings, you may put an end to a Newton, a Voltaire or a Walter Scott. What human being, unendowed with supernaturel discernment, could tell where the stamping out was necessary?

One line of action only appears safe and practicable, and it is one which find an increasing number of advocates; namely the Sterilization of the Unfit. I do not use this expression in the sense of surgical interference, though this course is also often advocated; inevitably injustices would be done, mistakes would occur, ending perhaps in death; public opinion would be aroused, and no one would be allowed to interfere with the marriages of criminals and imbeciles for some generations to come. But what must necessarily be done if society is not to be swamped with the criminals, the idiots, the imbe-

ciles, the congenitally defective, which she now so sedulously cares for, is that the unfit should be kept under kindly but strict supervision; the sexes strictly separated, and a *life long surveillance* kept up. And for practical purposes no cognizance can be taken of the Unfit till they are or become chargeable to the State. An expensive and troublesome course, it may be said, but what is the expense of the life-long care and surveillance of the present generation of the Unfit, compared to the incalculable expense and mischief of allowing them to propagate their species without check?

For conclusion I hope any readers who may be interested in the subject of this paper, will read an article in the *Arena* for November 1894, entitled "The Relation of Imbecility to Crime," by Martha Louise Clerk. This lady speaks from a wide practical experience of the care of imbeciles, and she eloquently expresses opinions, much like those I have arrived at, upon more theoretical grounds.